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Creating Safe Pathways: Employment Advocacy for Military Spouses in Crisis

Today's Webinar



Event Materials

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OneOp

Readiness. Knowledge. Network.

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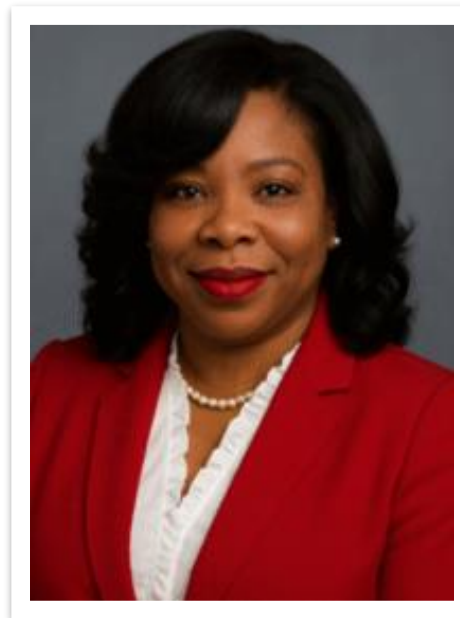
This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Military Family Readiness Policy, U.S. Department of Defense under Award Number 2023-48770-41333.

Today's Presenters



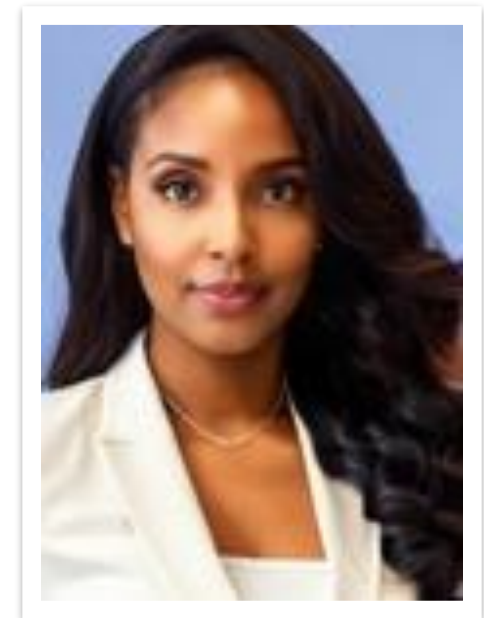
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Learning Objectives

1. Increase awareness of how employment status and conditions may intersect with domestic abuse and family violence
2. Identify key factors related to military spouse employment that may influence vulnerability and resilience in households impacted by domestic abuse
3. Analyze barriers to employment that are specific to the military lifestyle, and their implications for client support and advocacy
4. Examine education and career resources for facilitating conversations with military spouses experiencing domestic abuse

Understanding Domestic Abuse in the Military

Defining Domestic Abuse (DA)

Domestic violence, or a pattern of behavior resulting in emotional or psychological abuse, economic control, or interference with personal liberty that is directed toward a person who is a:

- Current or former spouse;
- Person with whom the alleged abuser shares a child in common;
- Current or former intimate partner with whom the alleged abuser shares or has shared a common domicile; or
- Person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic and/or intimate nature with the accused and determined to be an intimate partner.

4 distinct types per DOD: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect.

Defining Domestic Violence (DV)

An offense under the U.S.C., the UCMJ, or State or local law involving the use, attempted use, or threatened use of force or violence against a person, or a violation of a lawful order issued for the protection of a person, who is a:

- Current or former spouse;
- Person with whom the alleged abuser shares a child in common;
- Current or former intimate partner with whom the alleged abuser shares or has shared a common domicile; or
- Person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the accused and determined to be an intimate partner.

Defining Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Within the context of eligibility for Family Advocacy Program (FAP) services, a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the alleged abuser, as determined by the length of the relationship, the type of relationship, and the frequency of interaction between the person and the alleged abuser. An intimate partner is informed by, but not limited to, the totality of factors such as:

- Previous or ongoing consensual intimate or sexual behaviors.
- History of ongoing dating or expressed interest in continued dating or the potential for ongoing relationship (e.g. history of repeated break-ups and reconciliations).
- Self-identification by the victim or alleged abuser as intimate partners or identification by others as a couple.
- Emotional connectedness (e.g., relationship is a priority, partners may have discussed a future together).
- Familiarity and knowledge of each other's lives.

Understanding Domestic Abuse in the Military

Reports of DV/IPV

- Report made
- Clinical Case Staff Meeting (CCSM)
- Incident Determination Committee (IDC)
- Intervention
- Ongoing assessment

Prevalence of Family Violence

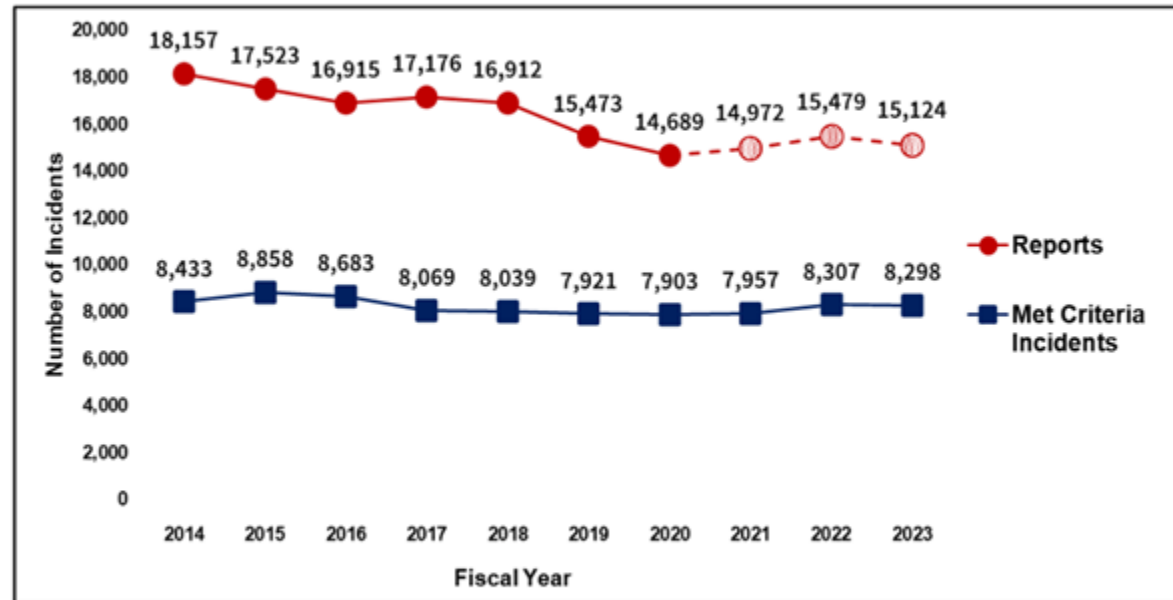
Prevalence of DV

- (Spouse and IPV)
- 15,124 reports
- 8,298 met DOD criteria

Spouse Abuse

- 11,789
- 6,283 met DOD criteria

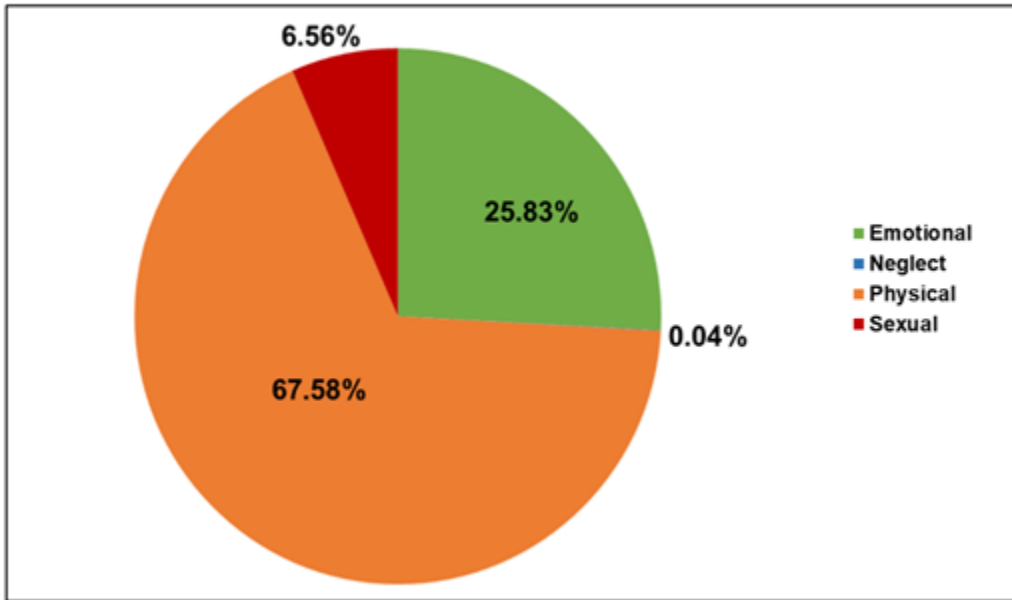
Figure 22. Number of Domestic Abuse Reports vs. Met Criteria Incidents (FY 2014-FY 2023)



Note. Domestic abuse includes spouse abuse and intimate partner abuse. Starting in FY 2021, reports of abuse are calculated separately by abuse type. A single report can only be associated with one type of alleged abuse. Similarly, starting in FY 2015, incidents of abuse are calculated separately by abuse type.

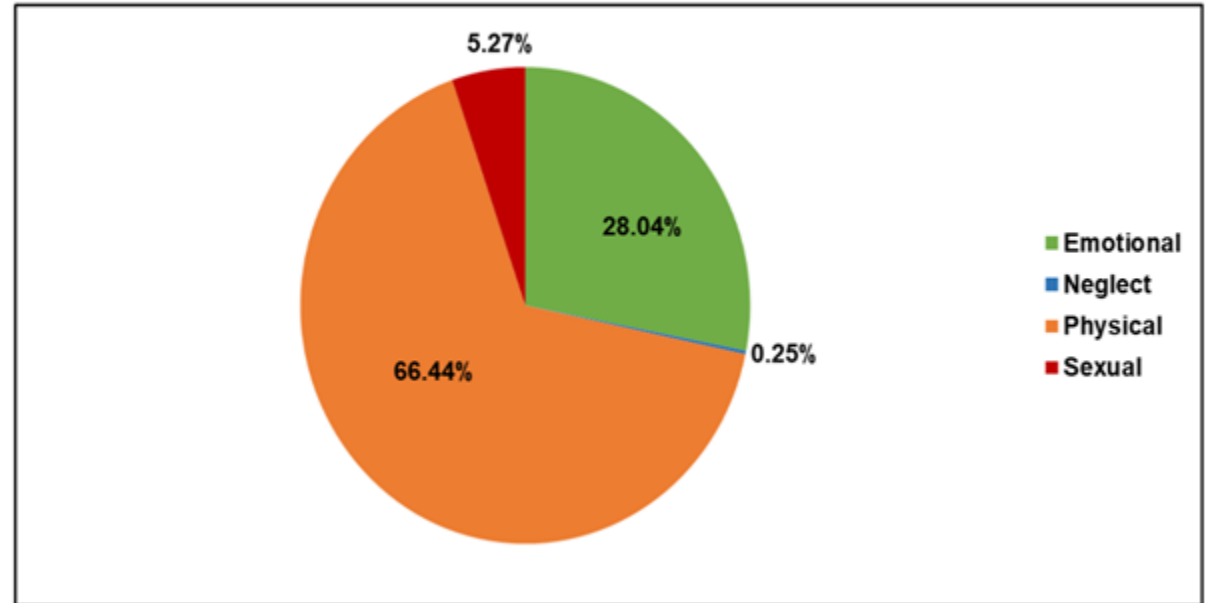
Family Violence Among Military Spouses

Figure 23. Types of Abuse in Met Criteria Domestic Abuse Incidents (FY 2023)



Note. Domestic abuse includes spouse abuse and intimate partner abuse incidents.

Figure 30. Spouse Abuse Reports by Abuse Type (FY 2023)



Family Violence Among Military Spouses Continued

Figure 24. Proportion of Met Criteria Domestic Abuse Incidents by Victim and Abuser Sex (FY 2023)

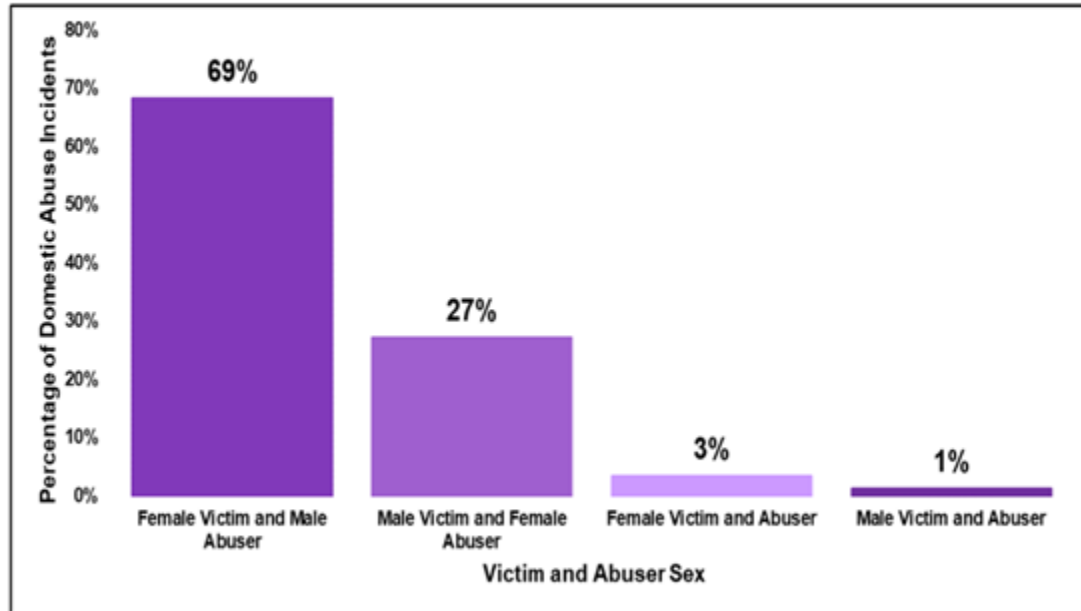
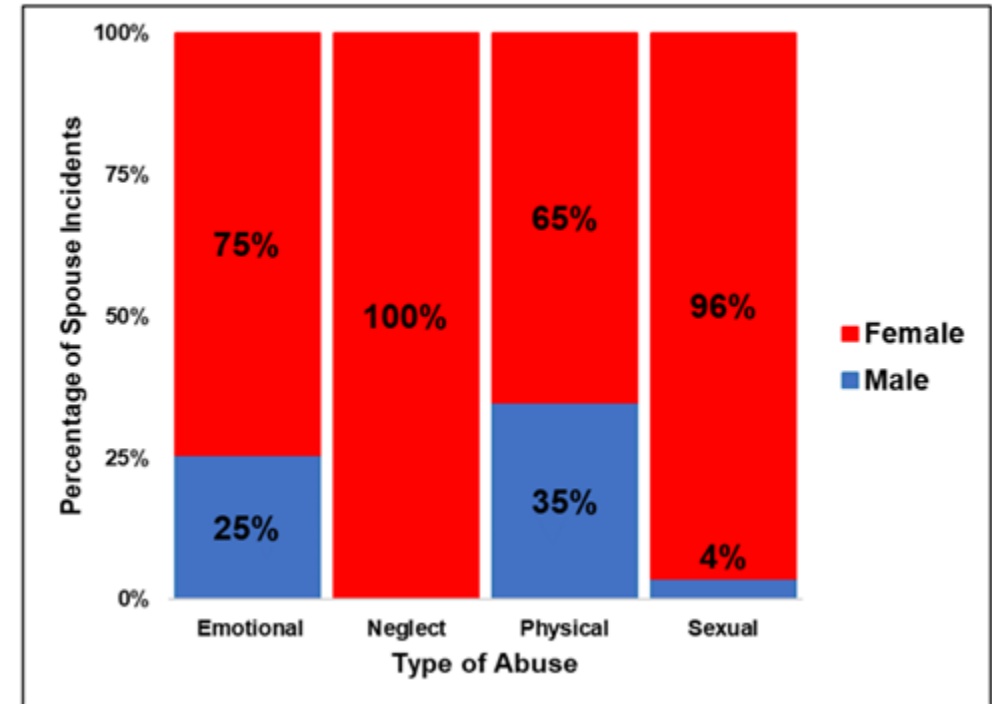
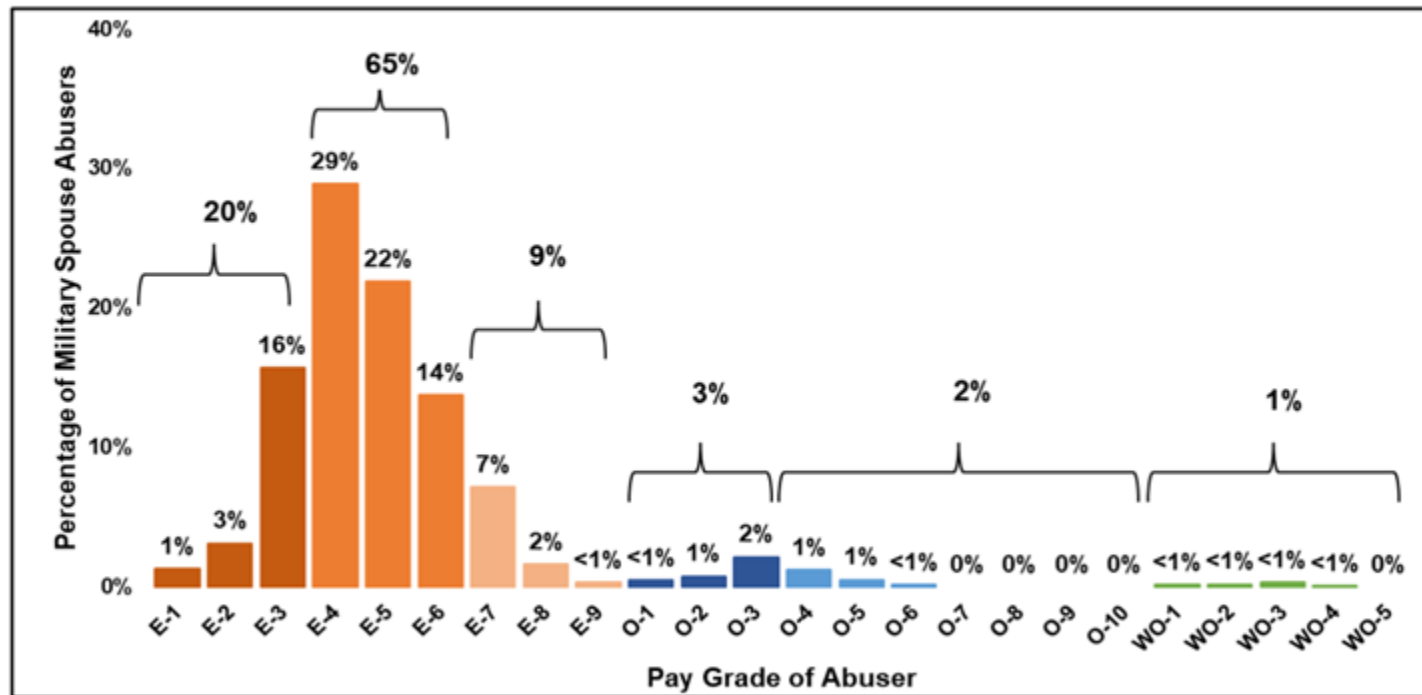


Figure 35. Sex of Victims in Met Criteria Spouse Abuse Incidents (FY 2023)



Family Violence Among Military Spouses - Pay Grade

Figure 38. Pay Grade Distribution of Military Spouse Abusers in Met Criteria Spouse Abuse Incidents (FY 2023)



Note. Military includes active duty members as well as Reserve and National Guard members who are in an active status.



Photo by Vitaly Gariev from [Pexels](#)

Help-Seeking Behavior

When Military Spouses Seek Support

- Third party reports
- Child involvement
- Urgency
- Feeling unsafe or isolated
- After a training/outreach event
- Multiple attempts



Image from National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre. (2020). *Help-seeking behavior*. <https://nvpc.org.sg/sector-insights/mental-health/>

How Military Spouses Seek Support

- Security
- FAP
- Ombudsman/ Key Spouse
- Close friend
- Reported by third party
- Referral



Photo by Liza Summer from [Pexels](#)

Barriers to Seeking Help

- Stigma
- Isolation
- “Dependent” label and lifestyle
- Misinformation
- Reputation
- Fear
- Lack of options/resources
- Lack of information
- Mixed messaging
- Unclear guidance and contact information
- Prior exposure to violence
- Personal upbringing

Vulnerability Factors Among Military Spouses

Vulnerability Factors

- Economic dependence and financial instability
- Isolation from support networks
- Stress
- Deployment
- Work-life-family balance
- Access to firearms
- Mental health challenges
- Past trauma

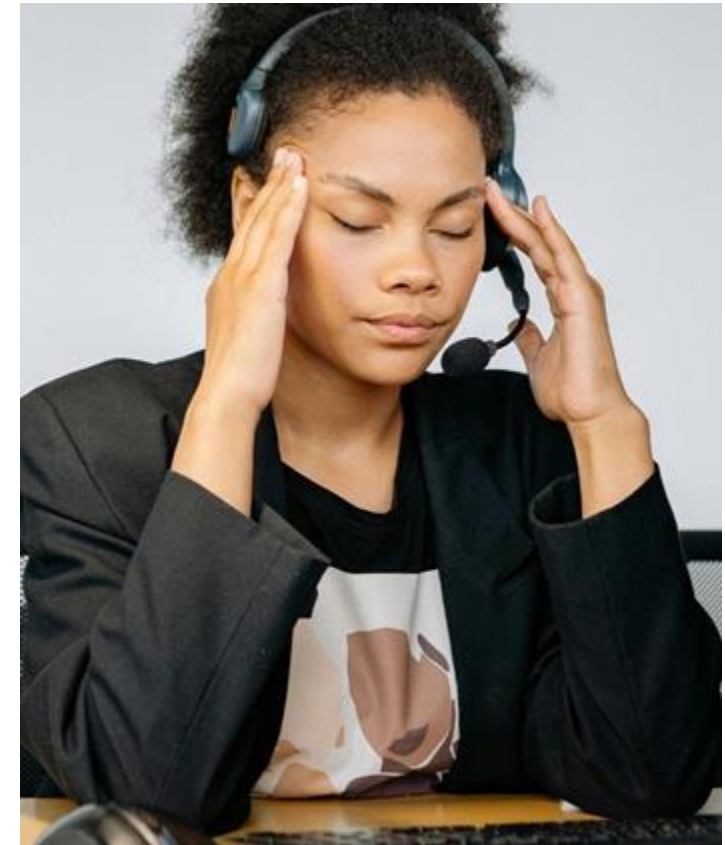


Photo by Yan Krukau from [Pexels](#)

Challenges in Military Contexts

- Lack of support networks
- Unclear guidance
- Underutilized services
- Limited knowledge of programs/ resources available
- Living in a "fishbowl"
- Imbalance in IDC
- Response/ treatment from support systems

Intersection of Employment and Domestic Abuse

Role of Employment and Employment-Related Education

- Economic independence
- Safety
- Personal empowerment
- Improve well-being
- Secure employment and increased salary
- Long-term stability
- Break cycle of abuse



Image from Adobe Stock by BillionPhotos, ID 490137159

Barriers

- Interference of abuser
- Employment gaps
- Limited access to support
- Childcare
- Legal requirements
- Safety concerns
- Systemic economic barriers



Photo by Omar Ramadan from [Pexels](#)

Employment as a Protective Factor

- Employment reduces marital instability
- Enhances overall well-being and identity
- Stabilizes socioeconomic stress
- Relieves financial dependency
- Increases agency



Adobe Stock, ID# [734590575](#)

Support for Survivors

- Learn about military culture
- Offer resources
- Build strong communities and networks
- Raise awareness and ensure access to resources
- Provide financial literacy and employment support
- Implement training and prevention education
- Provide evidence-based interventions
- Offer support programs and advocacy services



Image from [Startups magazine.co.uk](https://startups magazine.co.uk).
(2025). *How to encourage help-seeking behaviour in your startup.*
<https://startups magazine.co.uk/article-how-encourage-help-seeking-behaviour-your-startup>



Short Answer Response

What tools and resources do you utilize in supporting military families during these situations?

Share your response in the chat-pod.



Contributing Content from The Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) Program



The SECO Program

The Department of Defense Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program:

- Provides education and career guidance to military spouses worldwide.
- Offers comprehensive resources and tools for all stages of the military spouse career progression.



MILITARY
ONE
SOURCE

 **SECO**
SPOUSE EDUCATION &
CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

 **MILITARY**
SPOUSE
EMPLOYMENT
PARTNERSHIP
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

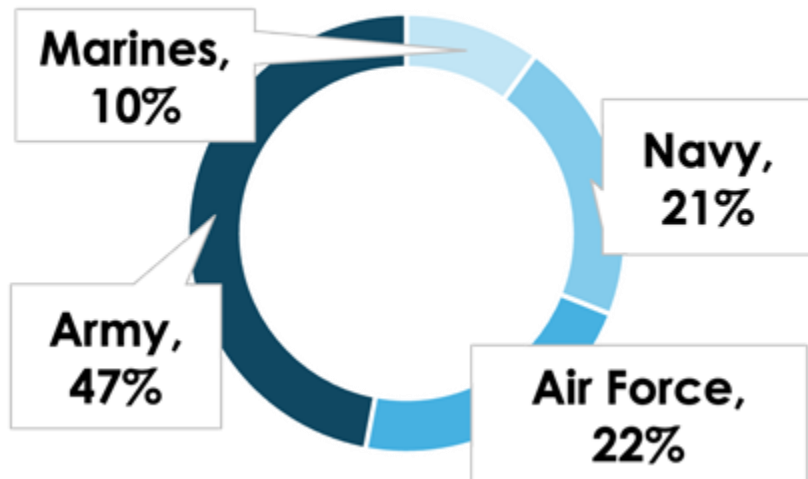
 **my** Career
Advancement
Account

Who is Using SECO?



SERVICE MEMBER RANK

62% of SECO users are spouses of E-4 to E-6 and 14% are spouses of O1-O3.



AVERAGE AGE

Trends slightly younger than the average spouse age.



Spouses would recommend SECO to others.

Who is Using SECO? Continued



MSEP job search
top visited page.

1.4M

Total MSEP job
searches in FY24.

26k

Unique spouses
searching for jobs in
FY24.

5M

MySECO page
views in FY24.

31k

Unique spouse
MySECO logins in
FY24.

99%

Spouse satisfaction
with Career Services.

Profile of a Military Spouse

62%

ACTIVE-DUTY, GUARD, RESERVE

561,008 of 897,916 total force spouses are **active-duty spouses**.



WHERE THEY LIVE

74% live **off the military installation**.

34

HOW OLD ARE THEY

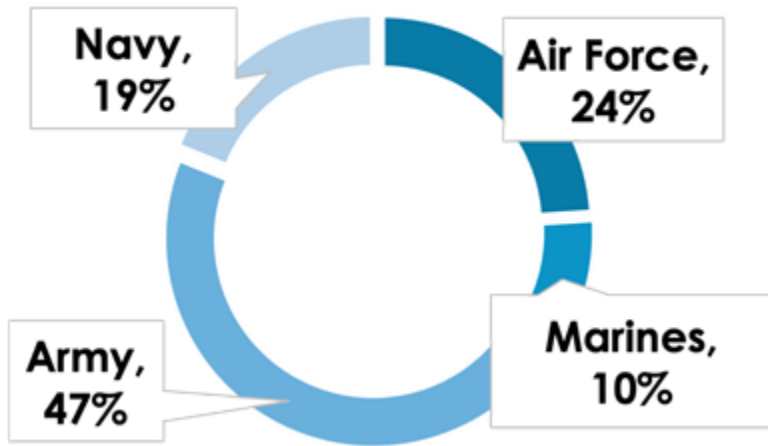
Active-duty spouses are slightly younger (32) and Reserve and Guard spouses are slightly older (37).



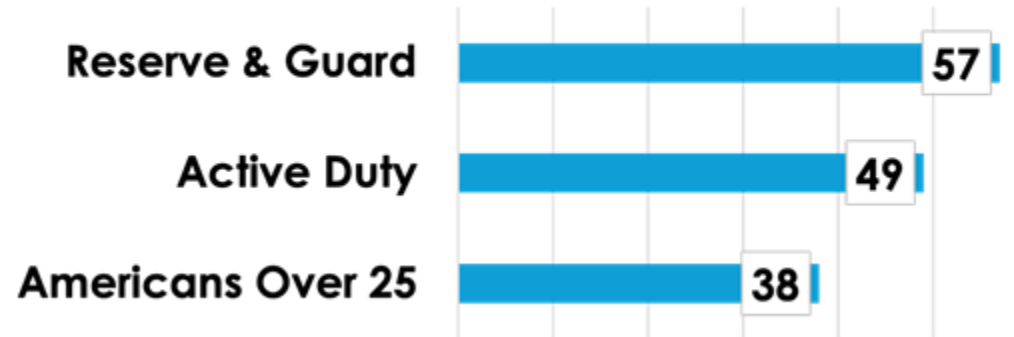
CHILDREN

Military families have an average of 2 children, and **69% have kids under the age of 12**.

Profile of a Military Spouse Continued



PERCENTAGE WITH A BA OR HIGHER



Military spouses have **higher levels of education** than their civilian counterparts.



88% are female and **12%** are male

Military Spouse Employment

- Of active-duty spouses, **69%** are in the labor force (employed or unemployed and looking for work).
- There is a **20%** civilian spouse unemployment rate – and declining; it was 21% in 2021.
- In 2024, unemployed civilian spouses spent an average of **23 weeks** looking for work, slightly higher than unemployed spouses reported in 2021 at 19 weeks.



Photo by Wendy Wei from [Pexels](#)

Military Spouse Unemployment Rate



-5%

GRADUAL DECLINE

Active-duty spouse unemployment is down from 2012, but at more than 20% for a decade.



8%

RESERVE AND GUARD

Reserve and Guard spouse unemployment remains steady at 8%.

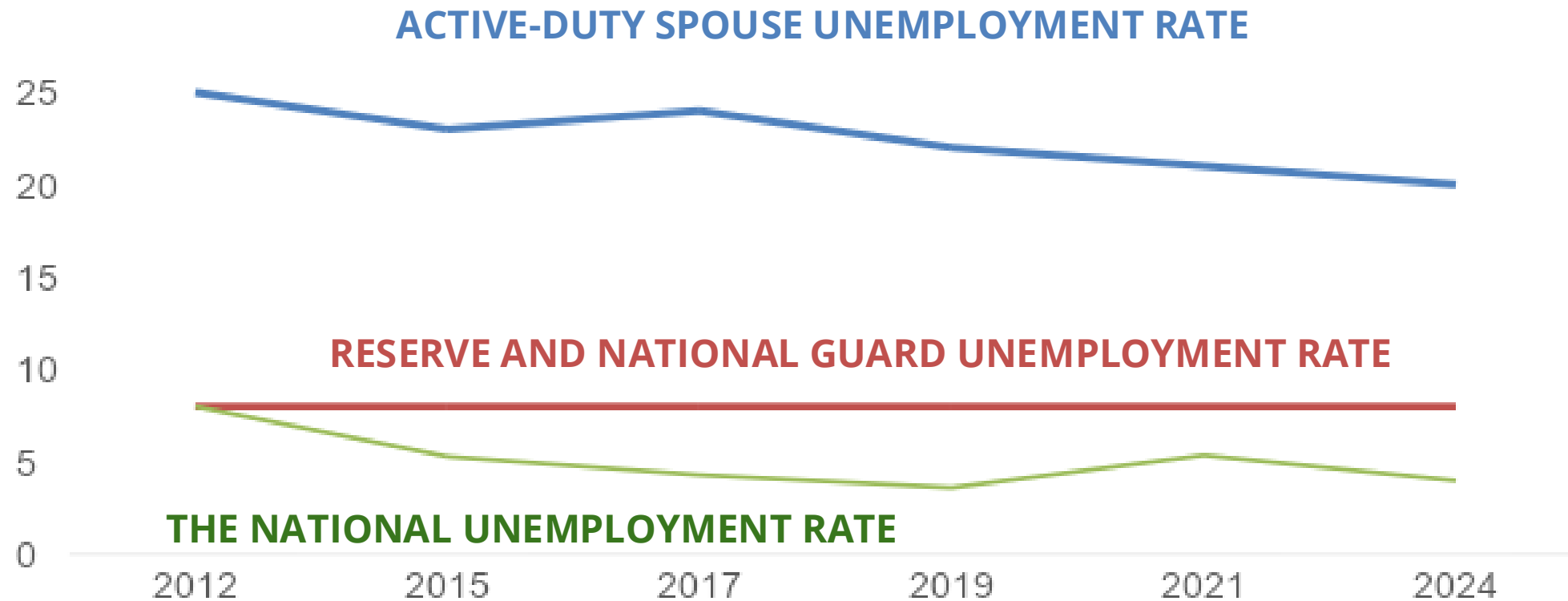


30%

POST RELOCATION

Unemployment rate for those that have relocated in the last year.

Active-Duty Spouse Unemployment Rate



Barriers to Employment



FREQUENT MOVES

Military families relocate every 2-3 years on average. 81% of military spouses have moved at least once.



RECENT MOVES

58% of military spouses have moved within the last 24 months.

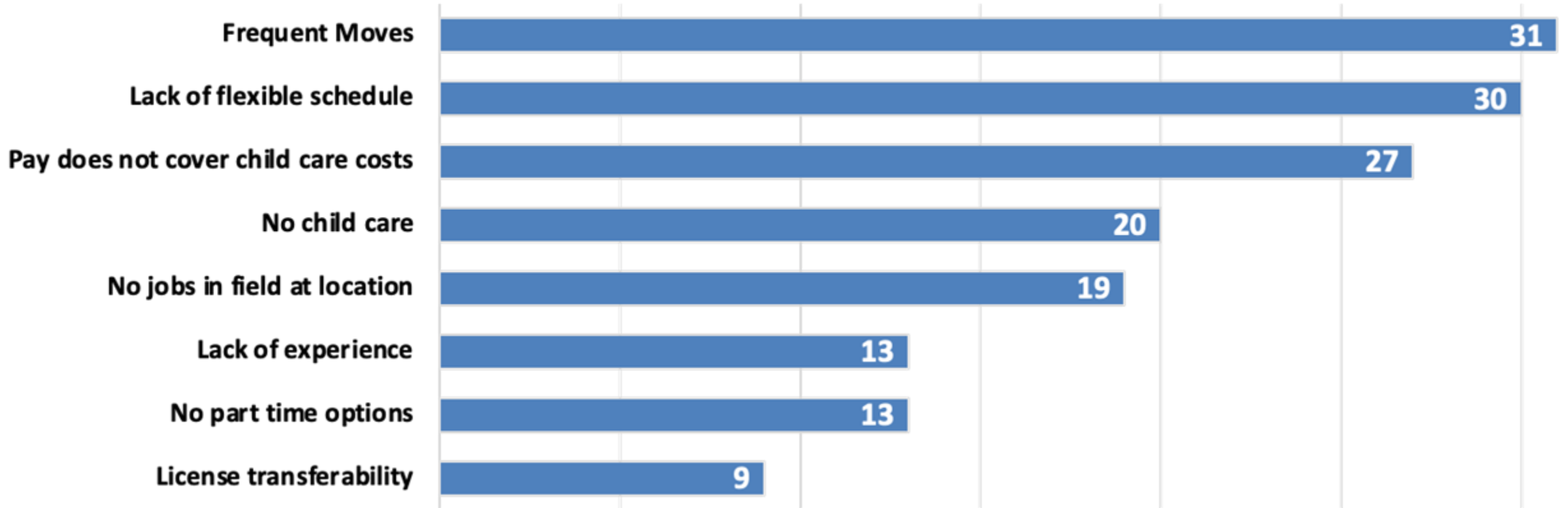


GLOBAL MOVES

Military spouses often find themselves in rural or international locations.

Barriers to Employment Reported by Spouses

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT REPORTED BY SPOUSES



Child Care

- **67%** of active-duty spouses have a child under age 18 living at home.
- **45%** of active-duty spouses have children under age 6 living at home.
- In 2024, **44%** of active-duty spouses with children under age 13 routinely use child care during the workday.



Photo by Pavel Danilyuk from [Pexels](#)

Deployment and Permanent Change of Station Moves

- **74%** of active-duty spouses have experienced their spouses being deployed for longer than 30 days.
- **23%** of active-duty spouses have experienced a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move in the last year.
- **18%** have chosen to remain in place and not move with their spouse at least once during their spouse's career.
- The most critical problems spouses experienced during PCS moves:
 - 49% : Finding employment
 - 45% : Loss of income
 - 40% : Unreimbursable moving costs



Photo by cottonbro studio from [Pexels](#)

Finding Employment After a PCS

- **Time to find employment after PCS:**
 - 51% of spouses: less than 4 months
 - 21% of spouses: 4 to 7 months
 - 28% of spouses: 7 months or more
- **35%** of active-duty spouses require a state-issued license for their occupation.
- **28%** of active-duty spouses had to acquire a new professional license/credential to work after their last PCS move.



Photo by Karola G from [Pexels](#)

Overcoming Barriers to Employment

Military spouses may consider the following:

- Earn a credential or degree
- Skill development
- Seek coaching and mentorship



Photo by Vlada Karpovich from [Pexels](#)

Resources

MyCAA Scholarship



MyCAA is a workforce development program providing up to \$4,000 in financial assistance.

- \$2,000 per fiscal year

Eligibility based on service member pay grade.

- Spouses of E1-E9, O1-O3 and W1-W3.

Use for:

- Training
- Licensure
- Associate Degrees
- Testing for College Credit
- Continuing Education Units

Supported by SECO Career Center

Free Udemy Membership



Specialized learning platform

- **More than 5,000 on-demand, flexible, online, self-paced courses**
 - Learn new skills
 - Enhance current skills
 - Stay up-to-date on the latest industry trends
- **Courses taught by leading experts**
- **Pathways to certification in areas including:**
 - Amazon Web Services
 - Microsoft Azure
 - CompTIA, Cisco, CISM, Salesforce
 - Project Management Professional
 - National Association of State Boards of Accountancy
 - And more!

LinkedIn Premium

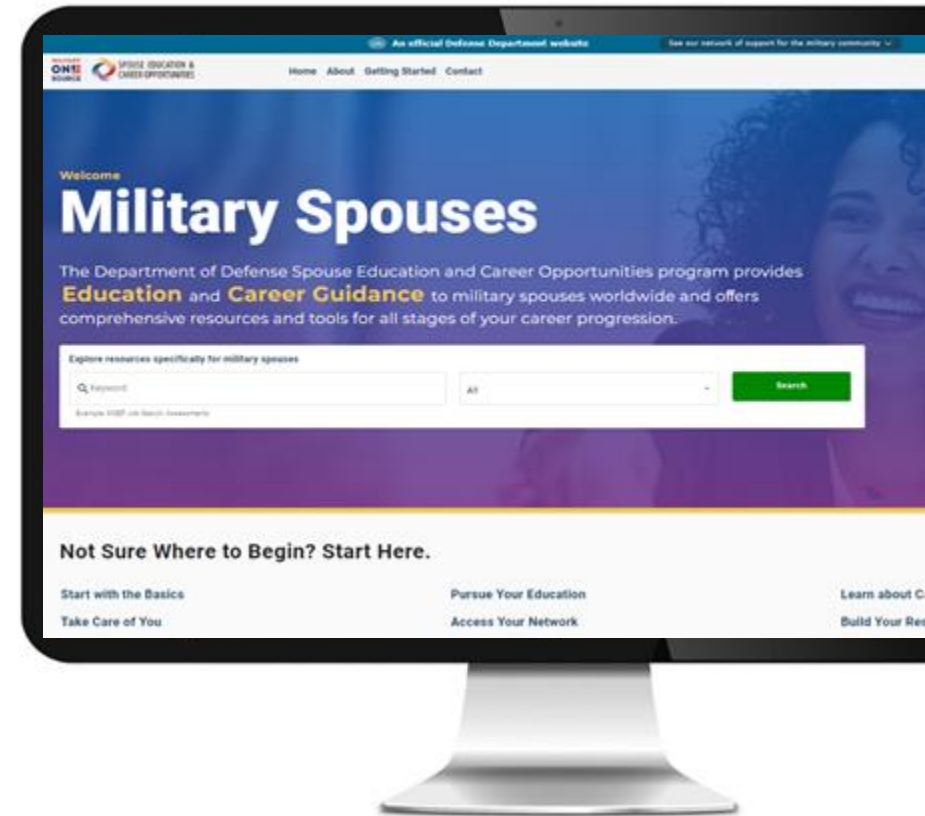
DOD's SECO program is proud of the partnership with **LinkedIn's Military and Veteran Program** to offer FREE access to LinkedIn Premium for all military spouses for one year.

Free LinkedIn Premium Access

MySECO Website

The MySECO website is a one-stop, interactive online career and education resource

- **Find a job**
 - ✓ **MySECO Profile and Resume Upload**
 - ✓ MSEP Job Search
- **Get career advice**
 - ✓ Career assessments
 - ✓ Research occupations
 - ✓ Resources for entrepreneurs
 - ✓ Hundreds of articles
- **Explore education**
 - ✓ SECO Scholarship Finder
 - ✓ Access MyCAA
 - ✓ Free **Udemy** (on-demand training, 35,000 hours of content)



SECO Career Center

Career coaches and advisors offer expert career and education guidance and direct military spouses to tailored resources. Career coaches help spouses:

- **Assess** current skills and aptitudes
- **Clarify** career goals
- **Explore** education opportunities
- **Maximize** job search efforts
- **Learn** to self-market and build networks
- **Create** a path to achievement

Every career coach has:

- ✓ A master's degree
- ✓ At least four years experience in education, career, or employment coaching and
- ✓ At least one certification (Certified Workforce Development Professional, National Certified Counselor Certified Career Counselor)



Photo by Jep Gambardella from [Pexels](#)

Career Coaching for Military Spouses

Access to free, comprehensive coaching services to gain information, guidance and support with education, career and life decisions.

GUIDANCE, RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Career Coaching For Military Spouses

Providing information, guidance and support with education, career and life decisions

- Work one-on-one with a professional career coach
- Explore educational and career options
- Learn about licensure or credential requirements recognized by employers (or the meet industry standards)
- Connect with employers committed to hiring military spouses
- Leverage the power of LinkedIn Premium
- Understand how to evaluate school/training options that work best for you.

Call 800-342-9647. Coaches are available from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET Monday through Friday or from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET on Saturday.

Contact a Coach



On-Demand Resume Review Service



Photo by Thirdman from [Pexels](#)

How does it work?

- Email a resume and cover letter, along with a career goal or job description, to a SECO career coach.
- Within three business days, a SECO career coach will send feedback to strengthen the resume and cover letter.
- If there are questions, just email the career coach.

Military Spouse Employment Partnership

MSEP connects the dots – matching hundreds of employers with the military spouses they want to hire.

- More than 950 vetted employers committed to hiring spouses
- MSEP Job Search: more than 400,000 active jobs
- Includes employment opportunities in every career field at every level
- Focus on remote and telework positions
- Employers ready to hire spouses today



Photo by Sora Shimazaki from [Pexels](#)

Role of an MSEP Specialist

Goal: To reduce military spouse unemployment through strategic partnerships and dedicated support.

- **Support military spouse employment** | Advocate for career opportunities and employment resources tailored to spouses.
- **Partner engagement** | Build and maintain relationships with MSEP partner employers to increase job opportunities.
- **Data and reporting** | Track employment trends, gather success stories and report metrics to improve program effectiveness.

Connecting to Support and Resources



Programs and Support for Survivors

- Fleet and Family Support Center, Military & Family Readiness Center, Work-Life Office, Marine Corps Community Services
- Clinical counseling
- Financial counseling
- Employment support
- Military and Family Life Counselors (MFLCs)
- Military OneSource
- SECO
- FAP
- Virtual Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) opportunities
- Chaplains
- Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO)

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Continuing Education



This webinar has been approved for 1.5 continuing education (CE) credits from the following organizations:

- The American Association for Family and Consumer Sciences
- The Patient Advocate Certification Board
- The Commission for Case Manager Certification
- D-SAACP Credentialing
- The National Council on Family Relations
- The National Commission for Health Education Credentialing
- The National Advocate Credentialing Program
- The Society for Human Resource Management
- The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work
- Certificate of attendance

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